CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies News

Published by: *The Graduate Studies Office*

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Vol. 3, No. 1, February, 1988

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From the Dean's Desk

Graduate Fellowships: Promoting Canadian Talent

During the last eighteen months, the main focus of the Graduate Studies News has been on the graduate programs offered by Concordia within the network of Montréal universities. This year, we shall profile the research carried out by some of our best students in those programs. For the purpose of this exercise, we define "best" to mean "winners of fellowships and scholarships in publicly adjudicated competitions". It is appropriate, therefore, to begin by examining both the objectives of these competitions and the criteria upon which such awards are based.

In 1988, we shall concentrate on winners of awards from three major granting agencies:

(1) The National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC);
(2) The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC);
(3) Les Fonds pour la Formation des Chercheurs et l'Aide à la Recherche du Québec (FCAR).

NSERC and SSHRC are financed by the Government of Canada, and FCAR obtains its funds from the Government of Québec. While the awards programs of all three agencies include the master's and doctoral levels of graduate studies, there are major differences in their objectives:

NSERC supports graduate studies in 98 specific fields of study and its postgraduate scholarships "are intended to assist in the provision of highly qualified manpower by providing financial support to excellent students working towards a higher degree in the natural sciences and engineering."

SSHRC supports graduate studies in 293 specific areas of study and "the purpose of the Council's fellowships programs is to support the training of new Canadian research talent in the humanities and social sciences and to ensure a supply of highly qualified personnel to meet Canada's research needs."..."The SSHRC supports research focused on the study of individuals and human society and culture, whether undertaken within a traditional discipline or as an interdisciplinary venture. It confines its assistance to research in the humanities and the social sciences."

FCAR, on the other hand, supports graduate studies in 441 specific areas of study, including medicine, and "les fonctions assignées par la loi au Fonds FCAR consistent à promouvoir et à aider financièrement la recherche au niveau postsecondaire ainsi que la diffusion des connaissances dans tous les domaines scientifiques et la formation de chercheurs. L'organisme contribue ainsi au développement social, économique et culturel du Québec en soutenant des activités de recherche tant fondamentale qu'appliquée et en favorisant la formation de chercheurs et

d'experts hautement spécialisés, par leur insertion dans des activités de recherche et l'octroi de bourses d'excellence."

The awards of all three agencies are based solely on academic excellence and are restricted to Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada. In almost all cases, academic excellence involves a straight "A" undergraduate record.

The rationale for the existence of the scholarship and fellowship programs of NSERC, SSHRC, and FCAR is the basic national need for highly skilled Canadian personnel in diverse fields. As we profile the work of Concordia recipients of such awards, we will try to address the question concerning the extent to which their work helps to fullfil this need.

Among the most elitist and prestigious Canadian scholarships are the **1967 Science and Engineering Scholarships** offered by NSERC. They are awarded "to outstanding students to enable them to undertake graduate studies and research leading to a doctorate and to take advantage of the best possible training opportunities, in Canada and abroad." A maximum of 60 new such scholarships are awarded each year to outstanding students who expect to receive an honors degree or equivalent in science or engineering. It is important to note that "Students may not apply for these awards on their own initiative. Only students who have been invited to do so by the chairman of the university's NSERC scholarship committee may submit an application for an award." Necessary conditions for the award of a 1967 Science and Engineering Scholarship are a first class academic records throughout the student's undergraduate studies. Moreover, "students invited to apply for one of these awards should be considered to have outstanding qualities and to be comparable with students who have won these awards in previous years. The attainment of an excellent academic record is not by itself sufficient to warrant selection." Candidates who are considered to be potential scholars will be contacted for an interview and during the interview they must demonstrate, in addition to superior scholarship and promise of research ability, leadership potential, the ability to communicate verbally and in writing, and extensive general knowledge and interests.

The majority of federally sponsored graduate awards held by Concordia graduate students are the **postgraduate scholarships** of NSERC and the **doctoral fellowships** of SSHRC. The intention of these awards is to develop researchers and to assist in the training of highly qualified personnel. In both cases, the programs are limited to candidates with a high standard of academic achievement in undergraduate studies and in many respects, they are complementary awards programs.

A truly Canadian type of fellowship is the **joint initiative program SSHRC/FCAR/NSERC**. The objective of this program is to broaden the base of scholars that can straddle the two linguistic cultures of this country. The fellowships offered under the joint initiative program "are intended to encourage students to change their linguistic milieu and their place of study from Québec to another province and vice versa. This initiative will provide a significant opportunity for academic and cultural enrichment to graduate students in the humanities and social sciences and will encourage them to study at institutions which offer the best graduate training in their discipline or field of studies."

The assessment criteria of all three granting agencies are similar: applicants are judged on their academic merit only, i.e., on the excellence of their past academic results, their background in the discipline chosen for doctoral studies, the originality of the program of study and research, and potential contribution of their work to the advancement of knowledge in their chosen field of study.

It is clear that the awards programs of NSERC and SSHRC are broad and national in character and that the FCAR objectives are, in addition, a reflection of specific needs of Québec. "Le programme de bourses d'études supérieures, de perfectionnement et de recyclage du Fonds FCAR vise les objectifs généraux suivants:

(a) aider les meilleurs étudiants à poursuivre et à compléter des études de maîtrise et de doctorat, ainsi que des stages postdoctoraux;
(b) favoriser, par des programmes particuliers, la formation et le perfectionnement professionnels, de même que la formation de chercheurs, en vue de répondre à des besoins prioritaires."

A significantly different aspect of the research of FCAR funded graduate students compared to NSERC and SSHRC funded students, is the fact that this research is often carried out within the framework of FCAR funded Centres of Excellence. In light of the remarkable rate at which Centres of Excellence are springing up across Canada, we will at some point examine the impact of the existence of such centres at Concordia on the quality of our graduate students and on the quality of our graduate programs.

As we discuss the research and the programs of study of many of our best graduate students in the months to come, we will also reflect on the significance of their work for Canada and will speculate on degree to which the NSERC, SSHRC, and FCAR awards programs meet the academic, cultural, and scientific needs of the nation.

M. E. Szabo

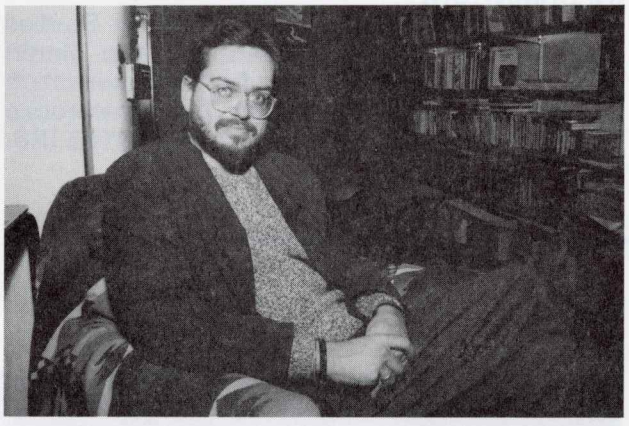
Media Studies: The Modern Age

Anyone born after television became a part of our culture has learned TV uses a special language. Any child can tell you that if a scene fades to black, the scene or time frame is about to change – and that if the camera zooms in for a close-up you're about to see an important detail. A sophisticated child will even be able to tell you that if the hero is in a predicament, it's probably time for a commercial break.

No one ever taught us that: watching TV did.

The conventions of TV language – including the special language used by commercials – affect our cultural and social codes, and how we articulate taste.

Students who graduate from Concordia with an M.A. in Media Studies become translators and trouble-shooters in one of the fastest growing fields of technology. New communications help us make sense of new social factors introduced by communications technology. Students in



GPD M. Allor

Media Studies search for solutions to problems introduced by these new technologies, such as cable, satellite or pay TV, computers and desktop publishing.

By examining the effects of these technologies, we can make sense of the problems they present and form a discipline that helps us come to terms with the complexities of how new media reverberates in our lives.

Concordia's Media Studies M.A. program offers two 45-credit options, a thesis and a non-thesis degree. Students can attend part- or full-time; the program thereby offers a maximum degree of flexibility. This is very important to professionals who want to complete a degree while maintaining careers.

"I wouldn't have been able to take these studies if I couldn't go to school part-time", said George Hargrave, a Quebec film-maker who just spent a year and a half working on "North to Nowhere: Quest for the Pole", an adventure documentary about five north pole expeditions aired on CBC January 6th.

Hargrave, who has completed the last of his core courses and is now deliberating whether he wants to write a thesis or take another five courses to complete his degree, said he originally entered the program to bolster his teaching credentials. Because he has taught film at Concordia and television in the arctic for native organizations, it's important to keep on top of new developments in communication theory. And for any media professional, courses on the legal aspects of communication and communication policy are more than useful – they're essential.

But one of the things Hargrave values most is the variety of perspectives other media professionals in the program provide. "There's an interesting mix of people, some are writers, some are in radio and TV, and some are strictly academic. The diverse contacts are important".

Allor said the program attracts two kinds of students: those already working who want further education in communication policy, management or economics to aid them in changing job tracks, and those who want to dive into research to prepare for a Ph.D. Many graduates have gone on to teaching or management positions, or have moved into the public sector to advise government on communications policy; others use graduate work to increase their understanding of media to enhance job performance.

M.A. students study communication management theory, research and practice, and how these three reflect daily practice. Courses probe such important areas as media policy, responsibility and management, media ethics, media law, and news in documentary and public affairs.

A significant point of strength in this program is its unique focus on technology in society and culture and its role in the formation of western consciousness; Concordia has a strong tradition in the Humanities.

"Look at prime-time TV drama, and the social role drama plays in any society", said Allor. "You can't find a society that doesn't tell stories to itself – about myths, legends, and artifacts. We see and read stories about ourselves... imagine what would happen if you never saw stories about your own world but saw them only about other societies".

"Concordia graduate students are especially well situated to study the impact of American television of Canadian viewing habits", he said. "They see how open access of the airwaves allows Canadians to see their own differences reflected back."

"Once we had paleotelevision, now we have neotelevision", said Allor. "TV before and after cable is not the same TV. If you're looking at cable TV, it raises the question of looking at TV as a social machine, and that leads to the question of policy: What should the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission do – should they allow more (cable) signals? What will the impact of that be?"

Electronic signals can't be stopped by borders, Allor noted: "In an electronic age, borders mean something different. The 49th parallel didn't make a difference to radio – and it doesn't make a difference to TV."

That means the CRTC has had to protect Canadian content in Canadian television: in its Regulations Respecting Television Broadcasting released last year, the CRTC decided to keep the current level of Canadian content required for Canadian public broadcasters at 60 per cent instead of reducing it to 50 per cent. Private broadcasters are still required to air 50 per cent Canadian content between 6 p.m. and midnight.

But Allor is confident Canadians would watch Canadian television even if the CBC aired 100 per cent Canadian content: "The Caplan Sauvageau report indicated that we watch about as much Canadian TV as we get a chance to."

It's expensive to produce all your own programming, but "there are lots of ways to control costs," Allor observed.

Although the United States now controls a larger chunk of the television market than Canada, that could easily change, he said, because Hollywood film and television production costs are higher than Canadian production costs.

"The U.S. has bigger market – but much of the American market comes for international sales", he noted. "If Australia and Japan watch American programming they can just as easily watch Canadian programming".

This program offers the opportunity to examine such ideas, problems and solutions in depth.

INFORMATION:
For more details about the M.A. Media Studies program, call (514) 848-2545, or write Martin Allor, M.A. Program Director for Communication Studies – Concordia University, 7141 Sherbrooke St. West, L-BR 421, Montreal, Quebec, H4B 1R6.

Profile: D. MacFadden

Debbie MacFadden originally joined Concordia University 12 years ago as departmental secretary for Communication Studies. By the time she joined the staff of the Graduate Studies Office she was the Assistant to the Chair of Communications Studies, where her ability to render order from chaos had become well known.

She brings to Graduate Studies a sense of humour, a willingness to work hard and the ability to cope with diverse and multi-levelled tasks. Her knowledge of the university from both a student and a staff point of view allows her to act quickly and with an awareness of different perspectives.

In her new position she is looking forward to new and creative ways of promoting graduate programs at Concordia.

Dean Szabo and the new Thesis and Publications Officer D. MacFadden

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typesetting: Centre Typographique
printing: Concordia Printing Services
photographs: B. McNeil